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To see in a mirror dimly. The looking glass self is self-shaming in borderline personality disorder

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Abstract

Symptoms of borderline personality disorder (BPD) can be conceptualized as the expression of and defenses against or response to the painful emotion of chronic shame, which may relate to early maladaptive schemas (EMS). The goal of this research is to examine levels of early maladaptive schemas, self-reported shame, and anxious or angry reactions to social put-downs as well as their associations. We also looked to assess the association of shame with BPD symptoms. Fifty-six patients with BPD completed self-report measures of EMSs, chronic shame, and reactions to put-downs. Comparison groups consisted of 24 patients without personality disorder (non-PD) and 80 healthy controls (HC). Those with BPD reported higher levels of EMSs, characterological, behavioral and bodily shame, and were more prone to react with anxiety and anger than non-PD patients and HC subjects. EMSs domains had specific associations with chronic shame and reaction types to social put-downs. Identity disturbances were associated with characterological, behavioral and bodily shame. Stormy relationships were associated with bodily shame. Chronic shame and anxious and angry reactions to social put-downs are prominent in patients with borderline personality disorder and are associated with specific EMS domains and with the symptoms of identity disturbance and stormy relationships.

1. Introduction

Although shame is not mentioned as criteria for the diagnosis of BPD in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM-5) (APA, 2013), there is an increase in the amount of empirical data
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